

TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE

January 28, 2014

Call to Order

The special meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Second Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex on Tuesday, January 28, 2014, at 7:13 PM. A copy of the notice of this meeting is appended to these minutes.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Wes Beal, Roland Chaput, John Leone, Adam Auster, and Eric Helmuth.

Elizabeth Patton arrived shortly after the start of the meeting. Arlington Chief Technology Officer David Good and Mark Fite of Options Technology Interactive also attended the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION:

*Approval of
Minutes*

Mr. Chaput moved to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2014, meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

Reports

CHAIR

Mr. Helmuth introduced Committee members to Mr. Mark Fite of Options Technology Interactive.

VOTING

TECHNOLOGY

PROVIDER

Mr. Fite said that Arlington is Options Technology's sixth or seventh representative-town-meeting client.

He said his firm is familiar with the Town Meeting form of government but that each town meeting has its own culture and traditions.

*Assessment of
Town Hall
Auditorium*

He added that he had performed a site inspection and that the venue works well technically. He said he will work with Mr. Good to avoid interference with wireless internet frequencies available during Town Meeting.

*Display of Votes;
Time Required*

Mr. Fite recommended using a large typeface for the screen display of individual votes, which will limit the number of precincts that can be displayed at one time to three. If Arlington follows Framingham's example and allows 10 seconds per screen for review, it will take 70 seconds to display a complete tally, he said.

In any case, he said, the display cannot be faster than 7 seconds per screen.

*Timing of
Voting Period*

His firm recommends a 20-second voting period, he said, to allow everyone's vote to be recorded.

He explained that the handsets are swept every 2½ seconds during the voting period. A round trip in which a vote is received by the base unit and then confirmed at the handset normally takes from 4½ to 5 seconds, longer, he said, if a signal is missed.

He suggested that by assigning half of the handsets to one channel and half to another, shortening the sweep period, it might be possible to test the system for a 15-second voting period or shorter period.

In subsequent discussion, Mr. Fite said that it may be best to use a 20-second voting period to accommodate human factors such as comfort and time to prepare, even if a shorter period is technically possible.

He said that Options Technology encourages town meetings to hold a practice vote every night.

Handsets

Mr. Fite said that handsets can be marked with the names and precincts of their respective members.

*Responsibilities
of Options
Technology
Interactive*

In the course of the discussion, Mr. Fite identified the following discrete responsibilities of his firm:

- providing handsets, a primary and backup computer, a primary and backup printer, switching equipment, and equipment for video output and connections;
- providing a "voting administrator" to operate the system;

- setting up and putting away equipment at each meeting, including initial setup of the Town Meeting Auditorium the day before the start of Town Meeting;
- advanced preparation of voting slides for all main motions under all articles and for other motions that can be anticipated;
- voting slides for other motions on the fly as instructed by the Moderator;
- vote data provided at the end of each night, typically on a memory stick.

Town Volunteer Responsibilities

Mr. Fite said that Arlington will need to provide for the following tasks and roles:

- staffing of electronic-voting help desk,
- a single official contact between the Town and Options Technology,
- two volunteers for handset distribution and collection,
- volunteers to label the handsets the afternoon prior to the first meeting, typically starting around 3 PM,
- volunteers on all subsequent meeting days to test and sanitize the handsets starting at around 4 PM.

Town Logistical Responsibilities

Mr. Fite said that Arlington should provide the following to Options Technology:

- a roster of names of members that has been checked for spelling and is in MS Excel format,
- an audio monitor for the voting administrator,
- access to the Town hall Auditorium the day before the first Town Meeting 10 AM–1 PM for set-up,
- three minutes notice of impending votes.

*Town Policy
Responsibilities*

He also suggested that the Town should have procedures to respond to the following issues:

- credentialing of new Town Meeting members,
- disputes about the accuracy of the electronic tally.

His firm does not resolve those issues, he said.

*Location of Voting
Administrator*

Mr. Fite said it would be useful for the voting administrator to be stationed near the Moderator and Clerk to allow for quick consultation and instruction.

*Introduction of
Voting System*

He suggested inviting members to a meeting about how to use the system before the start of Town meeting, and then planning several practice votes during the first night.

Mr. Leone, the Town Moderator, said he is already planning to hold a workshop for new Town Meeting members in late April and that the second half of that meeting could be an introduction to using the handsets for all members.

*End-of-Night
Reporting*

Data from the system are exported into Excel format, he said. Corrections, if any, are made in Excel, with documentation of each change, he said.

Options Technology archives data unless instructed otherwise, he said. Reports can be formatted by precinct and in other ways, he said.

Business

MOTION:

Adjournment

Mr. Auster moved that the meeting adjourn.

The motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Corrections

The reference to “open” town meetings in Mr. Fite’s remarks on page 1 is corrected to “representative” town meetings.

The second mention of the need for an audio monitor under “Town Logistical Responsibilities” on page 3, a duplication, is removed.

APPROVED
as corrected
February 4, 2014

Adam Auster, *Secretary*

Eric Helmuth, *Chair*

Documents attached to these minutes:

1. Notice of meeting

Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee

Eric Helmuth, Chair | Adam Auster, Secretary

Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 7:15 p.m.

Town Hall Annex, 2nd floor meeting room

AGENDA:

- 1 - Call to Order
- 2 - Review and approval of minutes
- 3 - Introductions (Guest: Mark Fite, Option Technologies Interactive)
- 4 - Electronic voting implementation in Annual Town Meeting 2014.
- 5 - Warrant articles
- 6 - Other business

Adjournment